

Public Participation

Public involvement and support are critical to the success of Wyoming's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) and to the state's ability to meet the requirements of Element 7 of the Congressional SWAP guidelines, which requires each state's SWAP to have "an effective public participation process." The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) motto is "Conserving Wildlife – Serving People." Without the public's continued political and financial support, the SWAP—like other WGFD efforts—will not succeed.

Public involvement in the SWAP has been divided into three components:

- Public outreach since the 2005 completion of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS).
- Public involvement in the 2010 revision of the SWAP.
- Future public involvement in the implementation and revision of the SWAP.

Public Outreach since the 2005 CWCS

Public Access to Wyoming's CWCS

Wyoming's CWCS, now referred to as the State Wildlife Action Plan, or SWAP, has been posted on the WGFD website since its completion in 2005. This document, and information on how to access it on the Internet, is commonly referenced in WGFD articles on SGCN and SWAP implementation projects.

Species of the Season Challenge

The public is engaged in collecting information on the distribution and relative abundance of Wyoming's Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) through the WGFD's *Species of the Season Challenge*. Through this program, ten different SGCN are identified each year: two mammals, two birds, and two herptiles [amphibians or reptiles] during the spring and summer, and two mammals and two birds during the fall and winter. The public is

encouraged to report observation of these species. The selected SGCN are posted on the WGFD website along with a fact sheet and a special reporting form. Twice a year the WGFD announces the SGCN for the *Species of the Season Challenge* in the "Backcountry" portion of its *Wyoming Wildlife* magazine, as well as in statewide and local news releases and on radio programs. Recognition of the top observers each season is provided by posting their names on the WGFD's website. The SGCN chosen for this public outreach program since its inception in 2006, are listed in Appendix A.

WGFD Publications

The WGFD has three principal publications for public outreach: the monthly *Wyoming Wildlife* magazine (~33,000 subscribers), the bi-monthly *Wyoming Wildlife News* newsletter (~30,000 printed), and the weekly email news releases (~15,000 subscribers). All three publications have been used to feature articles on the SWAP, SWAP projects, leading conservation issues, and SGCN. Articles on the CWCS/SWAP were featured after the CWCS was approved by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission in September 2005 and again in January 2010 during the revision process. Wyoming's SWAP was also the cover story in the January–February 2008 edition of *Wyoming Wildlife News* and in the March–April 2010 Director's Column of the same publication.

Annual Sensitive Species Funding Reports

Information on money spent on individual wildlife species including SGCN is provided in the WGFD's Annual Report. SWAP projects and other sensitive-species work for birds and mammals are available in the WGFD's annual Nongame Annual Completion Report. These reports are available on the WGFD website.

Public Involvement in the 2010 Revision of the SWAP

SWAP Quarterly Newsletter

In May 2009 the WGFD initiated an electronic quarterly *SWAP Newsletter* as part of the SWAP revision process. The newsletter was established to enhance awareness about activities and developments regarding the SWAP revision in order to facilitate public input. Contact information for the WGFD's SWAP Coordinator was provided for receiving questions and comments, and revision topics were included as they occurred.

A press release and an article in the WGFD's weekly statewide news release preceded the first *SWAP Newsletter* with instructions on how to be placed on the newsletter's mailing list. Each newsletter also has information on how to subscribe. Newsletters are automatically sent to all individuals who have contacted the WGFD for information about the SWAP. As of November 2010, the WGFD *SWAP Newsletter* had 212 subscribers.

Current and past *SWAP Newsletters* are posted on the WGFD website. The newsletter will continue to be used to communicate information about the SWAP's implementation after revisions are completed.

Website Posting of Revised SWAP

The initial draft of Wyoming's revised SWAP was posted on the WGFD website for public comment on September 15, 2010, and the public comment period ended October 31, 2010. Along with the posted document, information was provided about the background and purpose of the SWAP, the organization of the plan, changes since 2005, and how to provide comments. The public was notified about the availability of the revised SWAP and the public comment process through a formal press release and articles in WGFD's *SWAP Newsletter*, *Wyoming Wildlife News* bimonthly newsletter, and its weekly email news release. An announcement was also sent to the WGFD's official list of interested parties which comprises 160 lead contacts for

government agencies, industry associations, conservation and sportsmen groups, private landowners, and other notable stakeholders. Four local and statewide radio stations and two statewide newspapers ran articles about the WGFD seeking comment on the revised SWAP.

Meetings for Public Input on Wyoming's Revised SWAP

To inform the public about the revised SWAP, to answer questions, and to receive comments, 5 public meetings were held, and 26 members of the public attended. Meeting locations were chosen to encourage regional public attendance. Topics covered during the presentations included the purpose of the SWAP, the relationship between various chapters, how information was collected, where Congressional guidelines are addressed, and the process for prioritizing SGCN and developing SWAP SGCN priority areas. Questions and comments were answered and recorded during presentations. Information was also provided on how to access and submit comments on the revised SWAP through the WGFD website.

The dates and locations of these meetings were:

October 4, 2010	Green River
October 5, 2010	Jackson
October 6, 2010	Casper
October 11, 2010	Laramie
October 25, 2010	Lander

Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Presentations

Quarterly updates were given to the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission on SWAP-related issues and revision status. Wyoming Game and Fish Commission meetings are open to the public, and time is allocated for questions and comments from the audience on each subject discussed. Commission meeting agendas are posted on the WGFD website three weeks prior to meetings.

The final revised SWAP, with public comments incorporated, was posted on the WGFD's website on January 7, 2011. The Commission meeting in which formal approval of the revised

SWAP was considered was held on January 28, 2011. This meeting provided an additional opportunity for members of the public to provide feedback about the SWAP before the revised plan was adopted by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission.

Coordination with Partners

Numerous agencies, organizations, and individuals participated in the 2010 revision of Wyoming's SWAP by providing input and reviewing draft documents. These individuals are listed at the end of sections within each chapter. Additionally, the SWAP Interagency Advisory Team was active throughout the revision process. Participants in the revision process brought varying perspectives from their respective organizations and constituencies.

Public Involvement in the Implementation of the SWAP and Future Revisions

Wyoming's 2010 revised SWAP was organized and written specifically to be accessible to the public. The selection of terrestrial and aquatic habitat classification units, the design of maps, the inclusion of background information on threats and current conservation initiatives, and the avoidance of jargon were all intentional strategies, chosen to enhance public understanding of wildlife threats and recommended conservation actions.

The WGFD plans to continue to involve the public in the implementation and future revisions of the SWAP through its quarterly *SWAP Newsletter*, *Species of the Season Challenge*, *Wyoming Wildlife* magazine, *Wyoming Wildlife News* newsletter, and weekly email news releases. The WGFD website will have a page dedicated to the SWAP where the revised plan will be permanently housed along with articles and links to information on SWAP projects and SGCN. The USFWS is also creating a Wildlife TRACS (Tracking and Reporting on Actions for Conservation of Species) website which will visually display the location and results of State Wildlife Grant projects.

Through the SWAP interagency Advisory Team and in regards to specific species and issues, the WGFD will regularly engage stakeholders and

partners to coordinate SWAP associated activities. The public will be notified about proposed updates to the SWAP prior to its next revision through WGFD publications, and opportunity will be provided for public input.

Appendix A

Species of the Season Challenge species

Spring/Summer 2006

- ▶ Greater Short-horned Lizard
- ▶ Long-billed Curlew
- ▶ Pika
- ▶ Pygmy Rabbit
- ▶ Tiger Salamander
- ▶ Upland Sandpiper

Fall/Winter 2006

- ▶ Canada Lynx
- ▶ Merlin
- ▶ River Otter
- ▶ Trumpeter Swan

Spring/Summer 2007

- ▶ American Dipper
- ▶ Common Loon
- ▶ Mink
- ▶ Northern Flying Squirrel
- ▶ Northern Leopard Frog
- ▶ Smooth Green Snake

Fall/Winter 2007

- ▶ Great Gray Owl
- ▶ Northern Pygmy-Owl
- ▶ Marten
- ▶ Swift Fox

Spring/Summer 2008

- ▶ Abert's Squirrel
- ▶ Burrowing Owl
- ▶ Lewis's Woodpecker
- ▶ White-tailed Prairie Dog

Fall/Winter 2008

- ▶ Great Gray Owl
- ▶ Mink
- ▶ River Otter
- ▶ Trumpeter Swan

Spring/Summer 2009

- Common Gray Fox
- Greater Short-Horned Lizard
- Harlequin Duck
- Northern Flying Squirrel
- Peregrine Falcon
- Smooth Green Snake

Fall/Winter 2009

- Northern Pygmy-Owl
- Northern Shrike
- Pygmy Rabbit
- River Otter

Spring/Summer 2010

- Burrowing Owl
- Long-billed Curlew
- Ord's Kangaroo Rat
- Spotted Skunk
- Western Spiny Softshell
- Columbia Spotted Frog